# THE SHARECROPPERS' VOICE

VOL. 1 MAY 1935 NO. 2

The Sharecroppers' Voice is the official organ of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. It is edited by Union men for the purpose of supplying the members and friends of the Union with reliable information on all matters of concern to the Union. The Voice will be published from time to time and will tell what every Union man and woman ought to know.

This is your paper. Give us letters, articles, songs, etc. We promise to print as much as our space will permit.

The price of The Voice is one dollar per year, or two cents per copy. If you are not a subscriber some friend of yours has probably asked that you be given this copy of The Voice as an invitation to subscribe. We want to make The Voice self supporting - So - send your dollar, then, for a whole year. The Voice will keep you informed of the doings of the S. T. F. U.

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The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union wishes to extend heartiest greetings and good wishes to its friends and fellow-workers of the Alabama Sharecroppers' Union. While the two organizations have no official connections they are as one in their united struggle against their common oppressors - the planters and the plantation interests of the South. Both organizations are struggling hourly against the oppression and terror being practiced against their members by the plantation bosses. Both organizations represent the toiling white and black farm workers of the South. Both are determined in their opposition to the plantation system and all that it represents in American life. Both are determined that nothing shall divide them in their common effort to throw off the yoke of slavery and tyranny that hangs like a mill stone about the neck of Southern farm workers.

Members of the Alabama Sharecroppers' Union the members of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union salute you.

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The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union is now in possession of the hammer and slide of the machine gun which was used by the night riders to shoot up the home of E. B. McKinney near Marked Tree, Ark ansas. It will be recalled that McKinney's home was riddled with bullets on the night of April 2nd. Two men were shot while asleep in the house.

We are advised that "The Better American Committee" of Poinsett County, or others interested, may reclaim the above described property by asking for it and presenting due proof of ownership.

Holly Grove, Ark., May 5th. (Special to Sharecroppers Voice)-- The Colored Baptist Church of Holly Grove, Arkansas was burned to the ground by a planter sympathizer on April 21st. The Negro Church was being used as a meeting place for the Holly Grove unit of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and in order to prevent the Union from having further meetings in the Church the planters near Parkin had it burned. A well known planter furnished a hiding place for the man who set fire to the Church and gave him comfort and protection.

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## BIG BUSINESS SHOWS ITS TEETH

On May 2nd the daily press carried the news that a delegation of big business men (the United States Chamber of Commerce) met in Washington and demanded that Congress postpone the "Social Security Program" for at least a year. They demanded that business be allowed to regulate itself, or, in other words, that business be allowed to sweat all the profit out of us that it is able to without any restrictions whatever.

They demanded that the 30 hour week not not be made into law and that No National Labor Board shall be established.

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## THOMAS presents plea of SHARECROPPERS

May 2nd - Norman Thomas, former Socialist candidate for the Presidency, and well known friend of the Sharecropper today made a plea to President Roosevelt in the interest of the Southern Sharecroppers and Tenants, especially those of Northeast Arkansas who have been abused so greatly because of their activity in building the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union.

When asked what he thought of the interview with the President he said "I think the President is interested."

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## COTTON PICKING MACHINE SHOWN AT CARNIVAL

How many of you sharecroppers saw the cotton picking machine in Memphis this week? It looks like maybe we will all be given a good long rest or perhaps a permanent layoff.

We cannot compete with machinery. Why not make up our minds that the laboring class shall own all the machinery of production and let it work for us and not against us?

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## "SLAVES MORE SECURE THAN SHARECROPPERS" Says New Orleans Professor

NEW ORLEANS (FP) - Southern Tenant Farmers have lost even the social security which Negro plantation hands had during slavery, Herman C. Nixon, Professor of political Science at Tulane University, declared during a recent address in New Orleans. "The Sharecroppers of today in Arkansas have not been brought suddenly to their present condition but their sufferings are the accumulation of evils which have been brewing since the Civil War." The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union has contended all along that the plantation workers of today are really worse off than the slaves of yesterday. Many students of history are supporting this contention of the Union. The slaves were well fed, clothed and housed. When they got sick they had a doctor to care for them. Sometimes they had a good master, more often they didn't however. Although slaves, they were looked upon as things of value. The majority of plantation workers today are of less value to the plantation owners than a good mule. Much better care is given farm animals than sharecroppers on most plantations. The sharecroppers lives in a dilapidated house, he eats the most miserable food, corn bread, molasses, beans and sour belly. He wears poor clothes and in winter freezes, his children go without food and clothes; he works "from can't to can't." If he gets sick he doesn't have a doctor's care because if he dies the planter can soon get another able bodied man to take his place.

There are plenty of slaves today who will work for the sake of seeing tomorrow's sun and just existing. King Cotton had his slaves before Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and he still has them. We are glad that a Southern University professor had the courage and guts to tell the truth about the sharecropper and the modern slaves of King Cotton. The Southern Tenant Farmers Union hates slavery of any sort; it wants freedom and plenty for all people. The voice goes out to the slave of today to throw off his yoke and proclaim his freedom once more.

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Thousands of starving men, women and children are marching on the Capital of Illinois demanding relief, while Governor Horner and the other mis-representatives of the people haggle over what method they can use to put more tax on the poor people of the state to get money to meet Hopkins' demand that the state bear a part of the relief burden.

The solution will probably be a sales tax which will increase the price of everything the poor people have to buy and use, thereby adding to their burden. It is ever thus.

Washington, D. C. - May 9th. The Costigan-Wagner Anti Lynching Bill designed to make lynching a federal offense was defeated in the United States by the combined efforts of southern democratic leaders and their friends. Senator Joe T. Robinson, of Arkansas, and Kenneth D. McKellar, of Tennessee, vigorously opposed the bill which would have gone a long way in blotting this unspeakable crime of lynching from America. America is supposed to be a Christian country and a civilized country but it is the only civilized country, so called, in the world where this barbarous practice is committed.

The bill was aimed at giving protection to workers like those of the S.T.F.U. who have recently been the victims of mob attacks and lynchings. Most people think that lynching is carried on to protect the white race, the home, church, etc. Do you know that 989 while people have been lynched since 1885 and a large number of these were white women. 3,185 Negroes have been lynched in this same period. (1933)99% of these victims belonged to the working class and most of them were innocent of the charges for which they were killed. They were poor people. Sometimes they were lynched by other poor people and often by the so-called "best people" of the country. In 1933 twenty eight persons in the United States were lynched, four whites and 24 Negroes. Two were burned: What were they charged with? Murder--8; rape--3; attempted rape--3; wounding person--3; altercation--1; no offense reported--3; striking man--1; slapping boy--1; kidnapping--2; stealing liquor--1; insulting women--1; threatening man--1;

It will be seen by these official figures of various police departments of the country, mostly the South, that there was no reason for these beastly acts. We have courts and laws. But these do not always exist for the purpose of giving protection to the weak and oppressed - especially if they belong to a labor union or want to be self-respecting American citizens. Trial by jury is one of the fundamental laws of the land and should be fought for by all real Americans. No one is safe from lynching in America. White or colored. The very people whom the workers sent to Washington to look after their interests voted against the bill which was designed to help them. Let us have law and order - fight against lynchings and terror!

The Editorial staff wish to congratulate the S.T.F.U. brethren of Oklahoma, on the wonderful organization they have built up and the energetic way in which they are working to build an organization second to none in the States.

Our best wishes boys. Stay in there and pitch.

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Plans are now under way for a close organizational campaign featuring county, district and state set ups.

Every local secretary should get in line with the plans and begin making preparations for getting their local represented in a meeting to be called for the purpose of organizing your county. This will enable every local to feel closely related to and in working accord with all the other locals of your county.

The county organizations, when completed, will all be closely associated in a state set up. Think it over and let's get our heads and hearts together to build a grand and glorious S.T.F.U.

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THANKS and APPRECIATION

The officers and members of the STFU concur unanimously in thanking the Committee on Economic and Racial Justice for allowing us the use of the Rev. Howard Kester, who is their Executive Secretary.

Rev. Kester is, as nearly as any man my "All things to all men", in so far as the STFU is concerned.

His work among us has been untiring, entirely unselfish and constructive to a degree almost unbelievable.

His services have been given without stint or measure to the lowest most abused Negro sharecropper as well as to the highest official in the Union. No night has been too dar no day too hot, too cold, too wet nor too dry for him to answer any call for his service.

His advice has been the essence of wisdo his acts have been the expression of the love that fills his heart for the poor and oppressed and his presence among us has be an inspiration to us all. God bless him!

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John Allen who was driven from his home because of Union activities has been ill f some time but is now rapidly improving.

We hope to be able to announce his complete recovery in our next issue.

PLEA FOR SOLIDARITY IN ARKANSAS

Members of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, listen! For months we have been struggling to build a Strong Union. This we have been able to do despite starvation wages, evictions and terror. The S.T.F.U. Stands Today as One Of The Really Great Organizations Of Farmers In America. It Represents The One Hope That The Sharecroppers And Tenant Farmers In the South Have, Therewith To Get For Themselves And Their Children The Good Things Of Life. It is the one of the few organizations of farm workers in the South that has stood solidly against racial discrimination. It believes that only if the colored and white farm workers struggle together and are not divided can all achieve freedom from the miseries of the plantation system; secure sufficient clothing and food for their families, good houses to live in, good schools for their children to go to, etc. Because of these things it is a powerful thing for the deliverence of the sharecropper.

This Union has attracted world wide attention and people of all classes and groups are interested in what the S.T.F.U. in Arkansas, and the other southern states, is going to do. The eyes of the whole country are upon you men and women who have struggled so courageously for your rights. The planters have tried to break your Union by every means known to them. The Union is stronger today than it ever has been. It has added new members to itself in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and other southern states. It has gained new friends throughout the whole country. We plead with all of you who have the interest of the S.T.F.U. at heart to hold fast to it and to do nothing that will lessen its influence and power in the South.

Your leaders have told you that there would appear among you, from your own ranks men who would try to mislead you for one reason or another. They have told you that there would be many false Moses to lead you astray. They have told you that, for selfish reasons and personal advancement, for self glory, men would try to lead some of you out of the Union, perhaps into some other Union. Such men have appeared. They have talked about breaking the solidarity between the colored and white workers. They have talked of selecting certain men to be your leaders. Some of these men you don't know and have no reason to believe that they can lead you anywhere except into trouble and misunderstanding. You must have confidence in the men who are doing everything in their power to get relief for you in Washington; who are sending relief, little as it is to you in Arkansas, who are sending some clothes to you through your leaders; who are doing all they can to bring more men into the Union and make it a greater organization. You know these men and we plead with you to pay no attention to any who try to lead you off and who make untruthful statements about the men who have helped to build the Union. Hold your meetings, let no one frighten you; protect your members; work harder than ever before; take no action whatever unless asked and authorized to do so from your acting secretary, J. R. Butler, and Howard Kester, who have been officially appointed by your Executive Council to assume charge of the National office for a few weeks. When they write you you will know their letters by the Union seal. Above all else these men have the interest of the S.T.F.U. at heart. Nothing will stand in their way to see that justice and right is done the members of the S.T.F.U.

They are trying to help you build a Strong organization and they will see to it that your interests are taken care of. Pay no attention to any letters sent you by anyone else. If you will but follow these men for the next few weeks, trust them now as you have trusted them in the past, you will see the S.T.F.U. grow into a mighty organization.

They pledge you their honor and their faithful services; all they ask of you is confidence and faith in them. They believe that you will stand by them during these days ahead.

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